Setting up the National Museum of Natural History in the Capital

883. SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) what was the purpose of setting up the National Museum of Natural History in the Capital under the Ministry of Environment and Forests;

(b) to what extent the said purpose has been served by the Museum;

(c) the amount spent by Government on this Museum;

(d) whether it is a fact that adverse reports on this Museum have appeared in the Press recently;

(e) if so, the reaction of Government thereto;

(f) whether Government have ordered an enquiry into the matter;

(g) if so, what progress has so far been made thereon; and

(h) if the reply to part (f) above be in the negative, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (DR. SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY): (a) The National Museum of Natural History was set up to develop a natural history museum in the Capital to depict the flora, fauna and eco-systems of the country; to conduct educational activities relevant to natural history; ecology, environment and conservation for the benefit of the public; to promote non-formal education among children and to create environmental awareness among the masses; to develop educational resources and to conduct ecological research consonant with the scope of the Museum.

(b) The Museum has developed four major Exhibit Galleries depicting flora, fauna eco-system of the country and dealing with econlogy and conservation. The Museum also conducts a large number of educational activities round the year, which include a mobile museum service, organisation of temporary exhibitions, school service activities, teacher orientation workshops, community awareness programmes, environment education courses for children, special programmes for handicapped children, etc. The Museum also has been listed in the International Museum Directory. Thus, the working of the Museum is directed towards subserving the objectives for which it has been set up.

(c) The Museum is an on-going organisation and its annual revenue budget at present is in the region of Rs. 115 lakhs.

(d) to (h) The Government have seen recently reports in the Press criticising the Museum in the implementation of Indo-US Herpetological Project. This project is a research project undertaken by the National Museum of Natural History in collaboration with the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittesburgh, USA to study the environmental diversity of the amphibians and reptiles in selected regions of Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. Such of the specimens collected by the field teams from selected sites as require further examination and analysis are sent to the Carnegie Museum. The project provides that 50 per cent of the collected specimens will be returned to the National Museum of Natural History after completion of their study at the Carnegie Museum.

Since very limited field work was reported to have been completed upto 1990, an extension of the project for another three years was approved in terms of the Memorandum of Understanding governing the Project.

Conversion of Telephone Exchanges into Electronic Exchanges in Arunachal Pradesh

884. SHRI NYODEK YONGGAM: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) what are the total number of telephone exchanges in Arunachal Pradesh which are proposed to be converted into electronic exchanges during 1990-91 and 1991-92; and